(e) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Some incidents of harassment against Sikhs were reported in USA in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001.

One person, Shri Balbir Singh Sodhi, was shot dead on September 15, 2001 in Mesa, Arizona (USA).

Acts of threats and vandalism against Sikhs and other Indians as well as NRIs / PIOs were reported from New York, New Jersey, Ohio and California etc. in USA.

(c) The matter was taken up with the U.S. authorities at the highest level. Prime Minister expressed his concern regarding safety of Indians, particularly Sikhs in USA to the U.S. President. In U.K. our Mission took up the matter with the Foreign Office and the local law enforcement authorities.

(d) and (e) President of USA assured the Prime Minister that he will do his utmost to prevent attacks and harassment of Sikhs and other Indian citizens. Instructions were issued to the U.S. Department of Justice, FBI and other law enforcement authorities to provide greater security to the Sikhs and other Indian citizens.

Yasser Arafat's New Delhi Visit

524. PROF. (SHRIMATI) BHARATI RAY: Will the Minister of EXTERNAL AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether President Yasser Arafat arrived New Delhi on 22nd August, 2001 to keep India informed of the development in his region; and

(b) if so, the details of the discussions held at the meet?

THE MINISTER OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI JASWANT SINGH): (a) and (b) President Yasser Arafat visited India on 23 August 2001. He briefed the Prime Minister on development in the Middle East Peace Process and requested him to use his influence for an early resumption of the peace process.

Visit of Russian Deputy Prime Minister

525. SHRIMATI VANGA GEETHA: Will the Minister of EXTERN. AFFAIRS be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that Russian Deputy Prime Minister visited India recently;

(b) if so, the purpose of his visit;

(c) whether he called for any joint efforts to combat terrorism; and

(d) if so, the details thereof?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF EXTERNAL AFFAIRS (SHRI OMAR ABDULLAH): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Mr. Ilya Klebanov, Deputy Prime Minister of the Russian Federation and Chairman of the Indo-Russian Inter-Governmental Commission for Trade, Economic, Scientific, Technological and Cultural Cooperation (IRIGC) from the Russian side, paid an official visit to India from October 14—16, 2001. During his visit, the Inter-Session Review Meeting of the IRIGC was held. Finance Minister Shri Yashwant Sinha co-chaired this meeting with Mr. Klebanov. Mr. Klebanov called on the President and Prime Minister of India. He met with EAM Shri Jaswant Singh, Raksha Mantri Shri George Fernandes, and Principal Secretary to Prime Minister and National Security Advisor Shri Brajesh Mishra. Mr. Klebanov also attended a business meeting with FICCI.

(c) and (d) Yes, Sir. The question of international terrorism was discussed during the visit. Both India and the Russian Federation reaffirmed that global terrorism is a threat to international peace and security. Cooperation to combat terrorism is becoming an imperative of contemporary international reality. The two sides believe that combating this menace should be on a comprehensive and long-term basis and should be directed also at those supporting, harbouring or providing safe haven to terrorists. India and the Russian Federation intend to make their full contribution to the establishment of such a system. They proceed from the understanding that terrorist acts admit no justification under any political, ethnic, religious, social, economic, or other grounds. Terrorism is an absolute evil; it is a global scourge to be collectively countered.

India and the Russian Federation expressed their satisfaction with the level of cooperation between India and the Russian Federation in countering international terrorism and other transnational organised crimes, which fuel terrorism, including drug trafficking. The two sides reiterated their resolve to continue and coordinate efforts for strengthening the international legal basis for combating these challenges. Russia has expressed support for our draft of the Comprehensive Convention on International Terrorism in the UN.